NATIONAL PARKS

THEIR IMPLICATIONS TO CANADA AND THE YUKON

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INTRODUCTION

During the next half hour, I am going to talk to you about one of the most important of Canada's natural resources - outdoor recreation land. This resource is, without doubt, the least understood, and yet it promises to have great impact on our way of life and on the economy of the country as a whole.

At the recent Resources for Tomorrow Conference, outdoor recreation needs were, for the first time at a national conference in Canada, given equal status along with the other other traditional resource users, such as agriculture, forestry and hydro power, as a legitimate demand on our great resource base. This place of honour was not accorded out of any sense of altruism. It was provided on the basis of cold statistical record as this continent witnesses the major change of natural resource use of the century. The organizers of the conference wisely recognized that the apparently insatiable demand for outdoor recreation space was going to grow in intensity in the years ahead and that there would inevitably be conflicts to the detriment of public welfare if recreation was not provided for in the total complex of overall land management.

As the various papers on recreation were presented, they confirmed the opinion that this new recognition of an ancient right of mankind for a place in the sun was entirely justified. It was shown very clearly that we could ignore this new dimension of land use only at peril to the future happiness and welfare of Canadian citizens and at peril to the Canadian economy.

The conference papers also showed that this new mass demand on our resource base, now serious and in conflict with other land users near our population centres, would be reaching out and rapidly exerting an impact on the land and on the economy of more remote terrains.

A more recent and very sophisticated study, carried out under the auspices of the United States Government, cost some 2½ million dollars. It used the services of many of the universities and leading authorities and confirmed these findings. This study by the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission noted that the increase in leisure time and increase in mobility is putting heavy pressure on what were considered relatively remote recreation areas only a decade ago. Looking ahead a few years, this study concluded that "... as a result of development in air was well as in auto travel, trips to reach distant vacation areas, for example, can literally multiply in the decades ahead."

Now what does all this mean to the Yukon, this burgeoning demand for outdoor space and this reaching out far beyond what were considered limiting distances only a few years ago?

I contend that it means the Yukon can no longer consider itself as a remote terrain accessible only to a few. It means that the Yukon will in the future be playing host to an increasing proportion of the 200 million people south of her borders.

It means that the magnificent scenery of the Yukon will increasingly come within range of holiday travel for Mr. Jones of Skokie, Illinois, and Mr. Marchand of Joliette, Quebec.

It means that the Yukon has promise for another major industry which could rival its traditional mining industry in dollar earnings.

These great changes in travel patterns and recreational habits of our growing populations will also, in even greater measure, affect your giant neighbour, Alaska, a fact of which I can assure you they are well aware. In fact, ladies and gentlemen, Alaska conducted its first survey of recreation land potentials thirty-three years ago; this was followed up by another study nineteen years ago which

02832

was acted upon; then, three years ago, a major study was made of transportation requirements of the Northwest and North America in which the significance of recreation land to the economy was given major attention; and last year a complete volume of the previously mentioned Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission dealt with the outdoor recreation potential of Alaska. All these studies, and particularly the last two, should be of great interest and value to the people of the Yukon in assessing the resources of today and tomorrow. I intend to quote directly from these studies later in this paper.

The Alaska studies on travel, recreation and park needs will undoubtedly be followed up by federal and state action. We can expect far-reaching programs designating land and expanding administrative agencies to supplement the already considerable effort along this line. This, in turn, will stimulate their economy through greatly increased tourism which is their goal. Now, where will the Yukon be in this picture? Will it be simply a throughway for this expanding tourist traffic or will it also be an important destination point along the chain of attractions from the vast population centres of the south to the remote lands of the west and north?

This will depend largely on the wisdom and foresight of such groups as this one right here. You people, senior administrators, prominent businessman, professional people and resource managers are determining right now how quickly the Yukon will step into the 20th century, how wisely it will use its varied resources and how broad and sound will be its economic base. The fact that you have included the emergent economic factors of tourism and parks in this conference, at least shows that you are aware of these trends I have mentioned, and are probably concerned about the vulnerability of a single resource economy.

National Parks - What they are, and why

I have given you some idea of what is happening today in the world of recreational travel and what others are doing about it. I would like now to talk about parks, particularly national parks, how they fit into the total land-management picture and their growing significance to the health, wealth and happiness of the nation.

First of all, what is a national park? What is its purpose? To the recreation traveller, it is that welcome green spot on the map, a destination point and objective to be reached so many days' distant from home. To the traveller, the national park is at once a haven and a guaranteed place of scenic splendour where he and his children will see natural features much as they were centuries ago. Also, they will experience adventure, refreshment and wonder such as they will not find elsewhere.

To the scientist-conservationist, the national park is an island of natural wilderness in a sea of man-disturbed terrains. To him, it offers a goldden opportunity to study biological forces in a natural state. He also sees these unique lands as a beginning point or control point from which he can measure and evaluate the changes in other regions which are constantly modified by human influence.

To the park administrator, national parks are a complex, sometimes frustrating, but always fascinating management problem. He is beset by the continual controversy of demand to utilize the resources or over-commercialize the attractions, and is yearly subjected to a rapidly growing horde of visitors who require facilities of all types.

To the miner, the forester, and the hydro engineer, the national parks may appear to be incongruous in the total land-management picture. As one forester said recently, "This is just like taking Miss America, with her luscious bust and shapely thigh, and locking her up in an institution. It's a damn waste of talent!" However, has he missed the point? Does he not realize that the value and desirability of park beauty increases with age? In fact, if we put a commercial value on a national park, and we are reluctant to degrade her in this manner, for surely her charms are beyond price, it is not too difficult to show that the cumulative value of a national park over the years, as we utilize the scenic

resources without depleting them, is far more than that of the traditional resources. This is especially so if there is any thought at all given during the definition of park boundaries to exclude areas of obviously high value for other resource use.

The economic report on the proposed Oregon Dunes National Seashore showed quite conclusively that the maximum economic benefit to this particular region was through development as a park. The potential as a dollar earner of each resource was carefully analyzed in this case, as compared to capital development in the park and the resulting tourist expenditure. The park won hands down with potential annual receipts of $26 million and a payroll of $6.5 million by 1990, as compared to $8 million and $2 million through usual resource exploitation.

Now this study, of course, was done in a populated region, but the point I wish to emphasize is that national parks are a long-term proposition. High-quality parks can only be set aside when a country is young, before it is carved up for other purposes, but their great value as cultural assets to the nation and as dollar-earners may not be realized for many years. The outstanding national parks on this continent were set aside fifty to ninety years ago when these regions were on the frontier, just as the Yukon is on the frontier today. Yellowstone, Banff, Yosemite, Jasper, Glacier, and others certainly would not be great national cultural assets and major influences on the tourist industry today if far-seeing men had not recognized these then-remote lands as something other than a source of raw materials.

It is really quite amazing to think that over 90 years ago, in 1871, when Yellowstone, the first national par, was established, that men could have had such vision. After all, this was a brand new unproved concept and those lands were even more remote and more inaccessible than anything we have now. Also, there was absolutely no promise of a tourist industry to give economic justification to the concept. These men simply believed that we should set aside for all time a relatively small proportion of our most scenic terrain in its natural state for the benefit and enjoyment of all future generations. It is a noble concept which arose from the free will of ordinary men and was later translated into law and copied over the years by at least 60 other nations. Canada, the United States, Japan, Australia and New Zealand are now considered leaders in this field.

Canada has 18 national parks encompassing some 29,000 square miles, or, to put it in scale, .7 per cent of her total domain. The National Park System cannot by any means be considered complete. In the years ahead, there will likely be at least one major deletion of area and we hope there will be a number of additions to round out the system and give representative samples of terrain where no such samples now exist. We should probably aim for 1.5 to 2 per cent of our total domain as national park land in the future. Alaska, at the present time, has just under 3 per cent of her land so set aside.

What sort of use do these parks get? Well, last year there were over 7 million visits and there is a fairly consistent increase in use of about 8 per cent per year. Our National Park use has doubled over the last 7 years and camping use has doubled in the last 5 years.

How much does the federal government spend in these parks? Last year the budget was about $28 million, or just about $1.5o for every Canadian. The biggest proportion of the budget in the last few years has been spent on roads, with over $70 million spent on the 180-mile scenic Banff-Jasper Highway alone. Major proportions of the budget are now being spent on campground facilities to meet the continuing surge of demand for this activity.

The federal expenditure on national parks is, of course, only part of the economic picture. It provides, however, the basic stimulus for all other expenditures, capital investment by private concerns which provide tourist services inside and outside park boundaries, and the all-important daily spending of tourists.

It has been estimated that 1962 income from non-Canadians travelling in Canada was over one-half billion dollars. It has been confidently predicted that this will reach one billion dollars by 1967, and it is quite within reason to expect that this will become Canada's biggest source of foreign currency in the not-too-distant future. These, of course, are much-needed, new dollars coming into Canada. In addition to this there is the substantial interprovincial tourist trade which, as far as I am aware, no one has attempted to evaluate but which surely must be many times that earned from non-Canadian sources.

How much of this substantial sum can be attributed to the influence of our well-known national parks system? Surveys run by the Canadian Travel Bureau show quite consistently that Canadian scenery is a primary attraction to tourists; and the national parks contain the best examples and the best-known scenic terrains.

Any attempt to determine how much tourist spending is actually generated by national parks becomes speculative as a result of a lack of statistics. However, by taking our attendance figures and using known daily spending rates, we can estimate that 37 million dollars was spent last year in the national parks by visitors. This again is only part of the picture. People have to get to the parks usually over long distances and this probably generates at least another 100 million dollars of tourist spending.

You might say these are well-known parks, close to population centres and therefore not too applicable to the Yukon situation. Here again, we must look ahead to the future. Travel patterns have changed radically over the last few years and will change even more radically in the future. Let me quote from Report No.23 of the previously mentioned Outdoor Recreation Review Commission:

- travel volume will double by 1976 and will likely double again by 2000.
- recreational travel will rise somewhat more rapidly than total travel volume.
- the average person will travel an additional 2600 miles per year by 1976 (average now is 4170 miles).
- the increased mobility (of populations) will be reflected in the wide choices open to travel virtually anywhere.
- recreation trips of long and short duration covering thousands of miles will become frequent rather than occasional as is the case today.
- "One consequence (of these changes) would be an increase in foreign visitors. These visitors, mostly Europeans ... are likely to be attracted to our magnificent national parks and forests."

In other words, everything would indicate that the Yukon will be well within the popular holiday-travel range from main population centres in the near future.

As the Battelle Report puts it, "The American tourist has just now reached the threshold to achieve an Alaskan vacation." And, of course, the Yukon providently lies across the path to that threshold.

To refer further to the Battelle Report, it concludes that " ... tourism offers the best promise for immediate returns to the northwest North America region." Petroleum production and tourism were considered likely to contribute most to increased income in the Alaska-Northwest Canada region in the next 20 years. With reference to tourism, the report qualifies this optimism by saying, " ... if an integrated and improved highway system is developed and if suitable tourist attractions and facilities are provided." And it also says the Canadian portion of the study area evidences even less development of its vast tourism resources than Alaska. It certainly is correct there.

Herein lies the challenge to the Yukon, ladies and gentlemen. The future is ours if we can apply the same pioneering zest to our nascent tourist industry that we have done in the past to our mining industry.

Evidently the Battelle people had great faith in us in this regard. Further in the report they state that expenditures by travellers in the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories in the year 1980 will be 57 million dollars per year or

about 10 times present expenditures. If this is so, then we might expect about 40 million of that amount to be left in the Yukon. And, I might remind you at this stage, that the present annual value of mineral production in the Yukon is about 13.5 million and has remained relatively static at that level for the last 10 years.

Turning again to the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission Report No.9 on Alaska, this report points out that in the past, Alaska has lacked industries to broaden, diversify and stabilize the economy. It states further that through recognizing, conserving and developing recreation lands as the need emerges, Alaska can achieve the balanced development long hoped for.

These statements apply equally well to the Yukon Territory.

As I see it, the Yukon's problem is not and will not in the future be so much that of initiating tourist traffic but rather how to intercept that traffic whose primary goal is Alaska. In spite of the rich and colourful history of the Yukon and its spectacular scenic resources, it will take much effort and enterprise to develop a substantial industry. Certainly it will take a gigantic effort and much broader recognition of resource potentials, particularly the recreation resource, if we are to approach the optimistic predictions of the Battelle Report.

A national park would be a major factor in such an endeavour. Again, as the Battelle Report points out, "Although the natural attributes are there, this area has no Sun Valley, Banff National Park, or National Monument area." And I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that the natural attributes for a national park do indeed exist here in the Yukon. Last summer, I had the strenuous but enjoyable job of assessing national park potentials in the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories. It was my first trip north of the 60th, but not my first such job of park assessment. I spent 10 years doing similar work in British Columbia and have spent the last three years in the federal service studying potential park lands from Newfoundland to British Columbia.

Nowhere in Canada have I seen such spectacularly scenic lands as exist right here in the southwest Yukon. There is no doubt in my mind that, with a suitably reserved area and appropriate development, these lands would rival any national park in North America today.

However, a national park in the Yukon cannot be a mean little thing; it must be in scale with the size and the grandeur of this fantastic land and it must be worthy of your historical past. It must be representative of the best of your scenic grandeur. Nor can we continue to whittle away at this gem once it has been set aside. Let us not delude ourselves on that account. A national park is an exclusive use of a very special type of land, with a primary purpose of preservation of the scenic resource. Preservation is not the end in itself but rather a means to the kind and quality of enjoyment which the national parks were established to provide.

The multiple-use concept simply does not apply to national parks, and national park land is not alone in this regard. After all, multiple use does not mean, as some would have us believe, that any use, anywhere, any time, is justified. Even in those lands where multiple use is acceptable, it usually means separating uses in either time or space.

But you cannot have other resource use in national parks without downgrading the basic quality of that park any more than you can have commercial activity in the National Art Gallery. All resource use leaves its mark on the landscape, either through the actual disfiguration of surface features through the activity itself, or the wastes from that activity, or through access routes, or through pollution of waters. When people travel thousands of miles to see a great national park, they expect to see it much as God created it. They do not expect to see evidence of commercial exploitation, no matter how small its mark in comparison to the size of the park.

Another aspect of the problem is that, once a national park is set aside and development begins, public funds are committed, soon to be followed by private funds. By setting aside land as a national park, we, in effect, guarantee preservation of the scenic resource on which these investments are premised. We have an obligation to safeguard these investments, both public and private, and, in a well-developed park, these can be very considerable investments indeed. Recently the Calgary Olympic Development Committee made an estimation of the investment in facilities at Banff National Park and came up with a figure of 90 million dollars. The recently prepared Glassco Report on Government Organization estimated that over 200 million dollars was now invested in improvements and facilities in Canada's National Parks. A major proportion of this would be private monies.

Consider the position of these investments if we permitted a logging show to strip the timber from the Bow Valley in which Banff nestles or if we opened a mine in the scenic alpine country of the Columbia Ice Fields. Some say, "But oh, a mine can be a tourist attraction." So it can, but people do not go to national parks to visit mines. A cocktail bar is also a tourist attraction, but tourists do not look for them in the National Museum.

The problem of reconciling the exclusive use of national park lands with demands of other natural-resource users does not lie in permitting exploitation of park lands once they are set aside. Rather, it lies in the proper location of the national park in the first place so as to encompass as little as possible of other resource potentials. It will be physically impossible to exclude all other resources, of course, but certainly the most obvious potentials can and must be excluded, and surely this great country of ours is not so poor and niggardly that we must scratch at the resources of this one to two per cent of our select scenic lands, for fear that we have left a few sticks of timber or a few tons of ore unexploited.

In any event, if it does really pain us to think that a national park might be encompassing a good mining chance, perhaps we can seek comfort in the thought that such ore bodies will still be there if and when it becomes critical to the welfare of the nation that they be exploited. During the last war, under the pretext of a national emergency there were many cases in Canada and the United States where national parks were opened up for production of timber, minerals and power.

Perhaps also, in the far-distant future, methods of exploration and extraction of minerals might be so refined they will leave no measurable scar on the scenic resources; in which case a form of multiple use might be possible without desecration of the scenic resource.

As I have implied throughout this discourse, we must take the long view on this national park problem with regard to other resource conflicts. So, what if we do tie up a few other resource potentials for a few generations? As a nation, we can afford it. And, as I have shown above, if we must measure all value by the dollar sign, the tourist dollar, based largely on our scenic resource, promises to more than compensate for any losses of resource values.

The important thing at this stage in our history is that we now have a golden opportunity to set up possibly one of the most scenic national parks in the world. We do not have too much time to dilly-dally around about this. The frontier moves far more quickly than any of us realize, and, once it has passed, the opportunity for a top-quality national park may well have passed with it.

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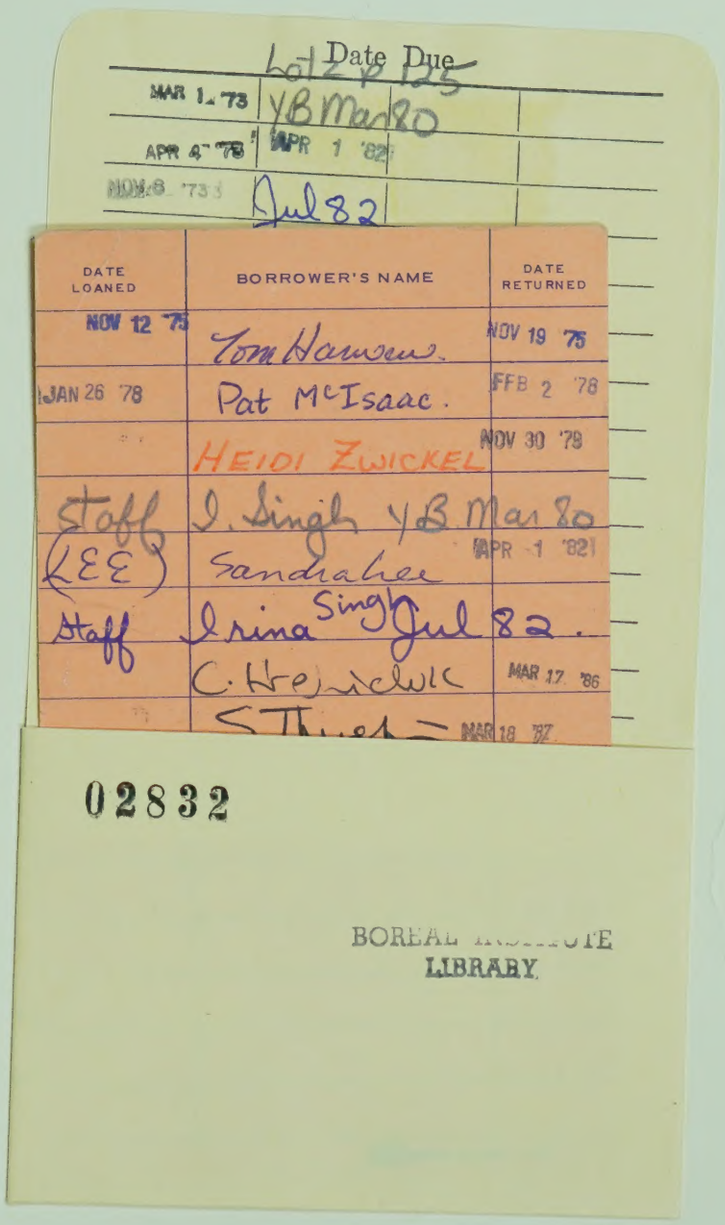

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